

M E M O I R S
O F A
P Y T H A G O R E A N.

IN WHICH ARE DELINEATED
THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, GENIUS,
AND POLITY

O F
A N C I E N T N A T I O N S.

I N T E R S P E R S E D W I T H A
V A R I E T Y O F A N E C D O T E S.

V O L. III.

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M E M O I R S
O F A
P Y T H A G O R E A N,

C H A P. I.

NEW DISASTERS, PROCEEDING
FROM THE SINGULAR MANNERS
OF THE EGYPTIANS.

I had no sooner escaped the danger which there was reason to apprehend from the physicians, than I began to suffer a new persecution from the people of the house in which I lodged. They immediately

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came

came into my apartment, and insisted that my eye-brows should be shaved. To this proposal I objected as unnecessary: adding, that my face being already so much disfigured with contusions, I ought not to encrease the deformity without a very forcible reason. "No reason whatever can be more forcible than that which exists," replied the master of the house. "We have all had our eye-brows shaved this moment on account of the lamentable accident; and unless you submit to the same operation, you cannot live in this family." "You astonish me, said I to him. What accident do you mean?" for

as

as yet I was entirely a stranger to the customs of the country. "Do you mean the sudden elopement of the physicians? For my part I am heartily glad that they are gone: and had they stayed, I verily believe they would have killed me." "I had a thousand times rather they had done so, replied he, than that they had perpetrated the horrid murder which has brought so much distress upon my family." "What! said I, have they really murdered any person in the family?" "They have murdered a divine animal, answered he: and it is for that reason that you hear such lamentation in the

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house."

house." "Mercy upon me! said I, is it for the death of a cat that the family makes all this howling?"

"It is a sacred animal, and the object of our adoration," replied he. "I therefore positively insist that your eye-brows be shaved: for it is an indispensable custom in this country *." I begged of him for God's sake to have me excused: observing that it was unreasonable to exact any such compliance from a stranger; and that when I returned home, which would be soon, I should make a very ridiculous appearance amongst my friends, if I lost my eye-brows.

* Herodotus.

"Trouble

“ Trouble me no more with your entreaties, replied he: for by the great Osiris, if you do not this moment consent to have your eye-brows shaved, I shall turn you out naked into the street. My house shall never harbour any person who does not respect the gods of Egypt.” Finding him inexorable, I was obliged to submit; and I had afterwards reason to wish that I had undergone the operation with greater patience: for by shaking my head in anguish, whilst under the barber’s hand, I received a great slash in my right brow.

It may well be imagined, that as soon as I was able to stir abroad, I

would be inclined to change my present lodgings. This I accordingly did, and made an agreement to board in a family where I observed an advertisement for that purpose. In this situation I had an opportunity of seeing the customs of the people with respect to their manner of living. I perceived that the Egyptians were great eaters of bread,†, and that they drank a liquor made of barley.‡ When the first course had been removed, it was universally the practice to lay garlands of flowers upon the table.* This I thought a very agreeable custom, but I own I could

† Atheneus.

‡ Ibid.

* Ibid.

not

not consider in the same light what was presented to the company at the conclusion of the supper. A man now entered the room with a naked person, as I thought, in his arms, and coming towards me, "Look upon this, said he, and be merry; for such as this is, shalt thou be when thou art dead †." Casting my eyes on the object, in obedience to his command, and observing it to be a corpse ‖, I started in astonishment and horror. The company burst out in a fit of laughter at my emotion, all except a lady, who was also a

† Herodotus.

‖ Lucian. de Luctu, Silius de Bello Pun.

B 4

stranger,

stranger, and flew to the corner of the room. " Carry it to her, said the master of the house ; for this is an object with which people must learn to be familiar." The bearer making towards the lady, as he was ordered, she screamed violently, by which a dog, that happened to be in the room, was set a barking. " As I live, said the master of the house to the lady, the god (meaning the animal) commands you to embrace it." The lady was too much agitated to pay any attention to the title bestowed upon the dog ; but I, imagining that our host was jocular, said innocently, " A pretty god indeed !"

deed !” At this expression the company seemed highly provoked.—

“ What, Sir ! said the master of the house, do you mean to insult our religion ? He is a god, Sir, and we revere him as such †. Nor shall his godhead be called in question with impunity, I assure you.” This speech was pronounced in so austere a manner that I was confounded. “ You have good reason to appear terrified, said he : I shall carry you this moment before the tribunal of priests ; and it is well if you escape with your life.” He had no sooner said these words than in came six men

† Herodotus, Diodorus Sicul.

belonging

belonging to the court of Justice, and hauled him away to prison, on account of a very extraordinary crime. The confusion into which the family was thrown by this incident afforded me an opportunity to make my escape ; and that I might not be again exposed to any inconvenience from employing a female porter, I carried my chest upon my back.

I now took lodgings in a different quarter of the town, to avoid being brought into any trouble in the affair of the dog. But curiosity led me to make enquiry relative to the charge against my late host. I found that
this

this hypocrite, who so warmly asserted the divinity of a brute, had been guilty of an act below even the meanest animal of that tribe. He was by profession an undertaker, and had committed fornication upon the corpse of a woman, which had been brought to his house to be embalmed.* For this unnatural crime he was condemned upon the evidence of one of his own men who had been accessory to the transaction: and from this time it became a general rule, that the corpse of a handsome woman of rank should never be carried

* Herodotus.

to the undertaker's, until four days after her decease*.

Neither in my new lodgings, nor in any of the private houses where I visited, did I ever after see a dead body introduced in the manner I have mentioned: but it was a general practice after supper, to bring into the room a coffin with the image of a dead man carved in wood and painted, and to carry it round the company: the person appointed to this office pronouncing distinctly to each the words which I have mentioned †. When I related at some of those places the story of the corpse, the

* Herodotus. † Ibid.

people have said, that they supposed it had happened at an undertaker's. I answered in the affirmative; and they informed me, that in such houses, they understood the practice was not uncommon. But they universally agreed with me, that in this case, the image was preferable to the original.

I was soon convinced by experience, that dogs were held sacred in this country; and not only dogs, but a variety of other animals. Indeed so great was the number of false deities which the superstition of the people had adopted, that it was dangerous for a stranger either to speak or
act,

act, wherever any animal was concerned. I therefore became extremely cautious on this subject; but even my caution soon brought me into a jeopardy similar to what had happened at the undertaker's.

My new lodgings, which I had chosen for the sake of privacy, were in the skirts of the town, where, though less liable to any molestation with regard to the late incident, was exposed to an inconvenience of a different nature. The annual inundation of the Nile having but lately subsided, the whole country swarmed with vermin, reptiles as well as insects, produced by
the

the great heat of the climate, operating upon the slime which the river had left behind*. My apartment happened to be upon the ground-floor; and the window being one day open when I was at dinner, a large frog leaped in, and planted itself amidst some fallad which lay on the table before me. Provoked at so disagreeable an incident, I was on the point of tossing out at the window the whole contents of the plate; but the thought occurring to me, that, by such an action, I might perhaps be deemed guilty of sacrilege, I judged it prudent to call for some person of

* Diodorus Sicul.

the

the family. As I was getting up for this purpose, a man accidentally passing, spoke to me at the window. "I think, sir, said he, you have been just now honored with an extraordinary visitor." "I have indeed, sir, replied I: pray is it a god?" "A god! exclaimed he. What do you mean?" "I only beg to know, said I, whether the Egyptians consider the frog as a sacred animal." "You are a satyrist, I perceive, sir, replied he, but our religion is not to be made the subject of ridicule by you, or any person in Egypt." I endeavored all I could to deprecate his resentment, by declaring that I meant no offence:

offence: but he was deaf to every apology; and pronouncing with a stern voice, "I shall have you secured this very night," he broke off hastily from me. Sufficiently acquainted as I now was with the bigotry of the people, and knowing that the Egyptian laws were extremely severe, I dreaded the issue of any impeachment on the score of religion, and again determined to change my lodgings immediately. Since my arrival in this country, I had often felt the inconvenience of having come hither without any servant. I had done so from the opinion, that as none of my father's domestics under-

stood the Egyptian language, it would be better for me to hire some of the natives in that capacity. Not having as yet however been able to find one fit for my purpose, and being also doubtful whom I could trust during my concealment, I resolved to carry my chest once more upon my own back, and to depart from a town in which I met with so much disagreeable treatment. Having therefore discharged my lodgings, I went to the beach where I had first landed, and took my passage in a vessel which was just setting out for Tanis, a town some miles to the westward, where we arrived next morning.

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

SEVERE PUNISHMENT OF ADUL-
TERY, CURIOUS HISTORY OF AN
IMPOSTOR.

AS I now entertained no appre-
hension with respect to any bad
consequence from the incidents at
Pelusium, I had no sooner fixed upon
lodgings in Tanis then I walked
along the streets, to take a view of
the town and the inhabitants. I was
surprised to meet several women
whose noses were slit. I conjectured

this to be the effect of some personal outrage, but was soon undeceived. They were married women guilty of adultery, and upon trial had been convicted of enticing men to the act. To disqualify them for such allure-ment in future, they were condemned by the laws to this singular mode of punishment*. Under the circumstance I have mentioned the paramour escaped with impunity: but if it was proved that a man had forcibly violated a married woman, the punishment lighted solely upon the aggressor; and the sentence was to have his private member cut

* Diodorus Sicul.

off*. The number of men thus mutilated might be equal, or even superior, to that of the women whose faces were disfigured, but of the exact proportion between the criminals of both sexes I could form no judgment, as the damage suffered by the men was concealed by their garment.

In one of the most public parts of the town, I was struck with the sight of a man embracing the corpse of a youth. He seemed to perform it by constraint; and near him stood a sentinel to enforce his obedience. On enquiring into the cause of this spec-

* Diodorus Sicul.

tacle, I was informed that the man had murdered the youth, who was his own son. For this atrocious act, parents here were not punished capitally; because it was deemed unjust to avenge the loss of life by executing those who had given it. Their punishment was to remain three days and three nights in the arms of the deceased*.

In surveying the town, I observed over a door an inscription in capital letters, expressing that rarities were sold there. Immediately entering the shop, I found in it the master, an elderly man of a formal deport-

*. Diodorus Sicul.

ment,

ment, and two strangers who were eagerly examining some curiosities. He presented me with a catalogue containing a vast number of articles, amongst which were mentioned a fragment of the ivory shoulder of Pelops, part of the under-jaw of the Trojan horse, and the club of Hercules.

Soon after my entering, one of the strangers said to the master of the house, "I think I heard you tell a gentleman yesterday, that you have often drank of Nectar, and have sold a great quantity of it. I presume you meant the Lydian wine of that name." "No, replied the other, I

meant the heavenly Nectar, the liquor which is drank by the gods." "Pray, said the stranger, how is it possible you could procure any of it?" "Some years ago, it was a matter of no great difficulty, answered the merchant. You know that all the gods and goddesses were wont to come once a year, to feast during twelve days in Æthiopia*, which is just hard by us; and always before that annual visit, a vast quantity of Nectar used to be sent thither. Though the deities drank very heartily on those occasions, there was much of the liquor left behind every year, and you

* Homer.

may be sure it was carefully preserved." "Then you have really drank of it?" said the stranger. "Yes, many a time, answered the other, and I never found any thing so invigorating. To convince you of its extraordinary virtues, I shall only mention one fact. About ten years ago I happened to procure six dozen of Nectar. I had then three wives: for in this country we are permitted to retain as many as we please, besides concubines*. Well, I do assure you, that after drinking a bottle of Nectar in the day, as long as it lasted, I have been able to go

* Herodotus.

twice,

twice, and sometimes thrice, round my little seraglio in the night, without feeling the smallest degree of debility next morning. I have strong reason to think that the Nectar even extended its influence to those with whom I cohabited, though they never tasted one drop of it. For as soon as my cargo was exhausted, two of my wives became low spirited, and the third ran away from me." "I am of opinion, replied the stranger smiling, that these effects may be solved from another cause, without supposing that the Nectar communicated any virtue by effluvia." "It may be so, answered the master also smiling;

smiling ; I only tell you the fact, and leave you to draw from it what conclusions you please. But I am a great friend to Nectar. I verily believe that if a man were to drink a bottle of it every day during a twelvemonth, he might live to the age of five hundred years at least."

The other stranger now took a part in the conversation. "Perhaps," said he, it is Nectar that you have got in this large bottle," pointing to a vessel on which was a label with these words, "The most valuable liquor under the sun." "No," replied the master of the shop, that is not Nectar. That is some of the water of Queen Euphrasia,

Euphrasia, by the use of which, as you may have heard, king Pheron was cured of blindness."

The story is thus related. Pheron, a king of Egypt, having consulted the oracle how he might be cured of blindness, which had afflicted him several years, was advised to wash his eyes with the water of a woman who never had commerce with any man but her husband. He began with trying the water of the Queen, his own consort, but it produced no effect. Nor did he find any benefit from that of many other women to which he afterwards had recourse. At length, however, he was cured by
the

the urine of a woman of obscure rank. In gratitude for this extraordinary benefit he raised her to the throne, and sent the adulteresses to a city called Erythibolus, which with them he commanded to be burnt *. To commemorate the incident, he erected two magnificent monuments in the Temple of the Sun at Heliopolis †; on one of which I afterwards observed the following inscription, written by some wag.

By the charms of the fair, when men were so minded,
Kings, as well as others, have often been blinded;
But never before Pheron was heard the surmise,
That the p—fs of a woman could open their eyes.

* Herodotus, Diodor. † Ibid.

But

But to return from this digression. The master of the shop, after expatiating on the virtues of Queen Euphrasia's water, informed us that he had sold of it to the amount of several hogsheads; and that in other great towns of Egypt, the sale of it had been in the same proportion. "It would seem as if she had made a prodigious quantity of water," said the stranger. "Perhaps no woman ever made more," replied the master; and in point of quality it is certainly unequalled." "I cannot conceive," said the stranger, how it should keep so many years without spoiling." "Your surprise is doubtless well founded,

founded, answered the other; for without the addition of some ingredient it could not be preserved. But we always mix with it a stated proportion of a particular kind of salt, which entirely prevents putrefaction."

"I am strongly of opinion, said the stranger, that the so much celebrated water of Queen Euphrasia was indebted for its wonderful efficacy, more to the addition of some ingredient than to any natural virtue which it possessed."

Just as the stranger had made this observation, the master of the shop went into a back apartment, with a countryman who brought him a rusty
three-

three-pronged fork, such as is commonly used in cleaning of stables. I overheard him say to the man, "This will answer extremely well. It may pass for a valuable antiquity." He had no sooner transacted his business with the countryman, and returned to the shop, than in came a person who seemed to be very curious in matters of antiquity. "Well, said he, can you now accommodate me with the pitch-fork which Hercules used in cleaning the Augean stable?" "That I now can, answered the master. After much enquiry, I have at length had the good fortune to procure it." Then leading the stranger

stranger into the adjoining room, he presented him with the impliment which had been brought by the countryman. "Here it is, said he : and to a true antiquary, such as you are, it is fairly worth its weight in gold." The purchaser grasped it in his hand with great eagerness, and contracted to pay for it the exorbitant price of four talents.

The master was now called into the shop by the stranger I mentioned first, who during the late conversation had been employed in looking at the curiosities. The chief object of his attention was a club, from which hung a bit of parchment, de-

noting it to be the identical club used by Hercules. “How much do you ask for this?” said the stranger, taking the club into his hand. “The price of that, replied the seller, cannot be one fraction under three talents, at the lowest.” “You are certain, said the stranger, that it is the club wore by Hercules?” “There can be no doubt of that, answered the master of the shop. I have somewhere or other a register of the persons who have been the proprietors of it, from the time of Hercules until it came into my possession.”

The purchaser of the pitch-fork, who was counting down money in the

the adjoining room, hearing their conversation, came hastily into the shop. "What are you saying about the club of Hercules? he asked. Why I have got the club of Hercules. Did I not pay you four talents for it? and it now lies amongst the curiosities in my musæum."

"Yes, replied the master of the shop, you have got one club belonging to Hercules, but it is probable that he had used several clubs in his time. I presume he was not a young man when he died." "You presume! said the other in a tone of indignation. I presume that you are an old rascal." At the same time

Inatching the club, he brandished it aloft, with the view of aiming a blow at the master of the shop. In this motion the club struck violently against the jaw of the Trojan horse, which hung from the cieling, and which it broke into a thousand splinters. The affrighted master sprung backward to the farther end of the shop, and fell upon a boar, of the genuine breed, as he pretended, of the boar of Erymanthus. The exasperated animal taking hold of him by the leg with its teeth, he roared in a terrible manner. In the meantime the person who held the club, meeting with no resistance to the blow

blow which he had intended, dashed the Herculean weapon against his own leg, and produced a violent contusion. The grunting of the boar, the roaring of the master, and the passionate exclamations of the purchaser of the pitch-fork soon filled the shop with a crowd of passengers, and I made my escape; reflecting on the consequences which had arisen from the imposture of one, and the credulity of the other of those parties.

C H A P. III.

AN EXTRAORDINARY INCIDENT IN
THE VOYAGE TO BUBASTIS.—
STRANGE FESTIVALS, AND WON-
DERFUL SUPERSTITION OF THE
EGYPTIANS.

IN a few days after my arrival at
Tanis, a yearly festival, much
observed by the Egyptians, was to
be celebrated. On this occasion vast
numbers of the people went from
every quarter of the country to the
city of Bubastis, where stood a mag-
nificent

nificent temple dedicated to Diana. The way of going thither was in large boats, in which the men and women went promiscuously. In one of these, I also took my passage. During the voyage, some of the women were constantly shaking the Sistrum, an instrument which made a rattling sort of a noise; while several men played upon pipes, and all the rest of both sexes testified the general merriment by shouting and clapping their hands*.

At every town which lay in their way it was their custom to stop. When the boat was hauled to the

* Herodotus.

land, some of the women continued to shake the *sistrum*, whilst others of them danced; and the greater number making up to the female inhabitants of the town, addressed them in a style of whimsical ribaldry, and pulled them by their gowns.* “You look as if you had been bit by an asp, said one of them. I’ll lay there is not a woman in the town who can tell me what a man is. Why, ye are nothing but the spawn of the river. Do you carry pyramids on your breast? Your buttocks might make a mount for an observatory.”

* Herodotus.

At

At a town where we landed, about half way between Tanis and Bubastis, I had occasion to see a very extraordinary transaction. The women who had come in the boat began to attack those of the town in the usual manner. Two of them taking hold of a handsome young lady by the gown, pulled her so violently as to make her fall backward, and expose the whole of her person below her navel quite naked to a crowd of spectators. A man beholding her in this situation immediately ran laughing towards the place where she lay, with the design, as I imagined, of assisting her to get up. But instead of performing

performing this duty, he laid himself down upon her, and, without discovering any sense of shame, proceeded with eagerness to an open violation of decency. My surprise at this behaviour was encreased, when the spectators, so far from shewing any desire to restrain this impulse of lewdness, formed a circle to protect him from any disturbance; and, during the whole of the act, appeared to view him with looks of the utmost veneration. At the conclusion of this strange incident, I was informed that the man was an idiot, and that persons of this description were considered as sacred by the inhabitants of the town, who, having chiefly

chiefly emigrated from a part of Greece; still retained the prejudices of that country.* As soon as he got up, he began to laugh as before; and all who were present expressed their sense of the honor which had been done the young lady so publicly.

When we arrived at Bubastis, many sacrifices were performed to Diana. It was computed that more wine was spent at this festival than in all the rest of the year.† It is certain that the quantity must have been prodigious: for exclusive of women and children, the multitude that resorted thither amounted annually to seven hundred

* Diodorus Siculus,

† Herodotus.

thou-

thousand †. This was the first time I had ever seen young women officiate naked at a sacrifice. But in Egypt it was no uncommon spectacle, especially at the celebration of those which were offered to the goddess Isis ‡.

I had now also occasion to see the sacrifice offered to Minerva at Sais. In celebrating this festival, they hung up at night, round every house, a vast number of lamps, filled with oil mingled with salt. These burned during the whole night; and the festival was thence denominated, “The Lighting of Lamps”.|| This

† Herodotus.

‡ Ibid.

|| Ibid.

solemnity

solemnity was not confined to the city of Sais ; for the same ceremony of lighting lamps was observed on that night throughout Egypt *.

Another extraordinary custom, of the religious kind, I saw at Papremis. Towards sun-set a few of the priests, after having gone through the usual forms of worship, attended about an image of Mars, whilst the greater part of the order posted themselves before the gates of the Temple with staves or clubs in their hands. Opposite to these, and armed in the same manner, was ranged a body of men, frequently amount-

* Herodotus.

ing to upwards of a thousand, who devoted themselves to this service. The image of the god, which was kept in a gilded box, in the temple, but had been removed on the eve of the festival to another hallowed place, was drawn back to the temple, on a four-wheeled chariot, by persons appointed for the purpose. According to custom, the priests who guarded the entrance refusing to admit the procession, those who marched before the image began to attack the opponents with their clubs. There now ensued a violent conflict, in which both parties aimed their blows chiefly at the head. The Egyptians

Egyptians would not admit that any of these combatants were ever killed ; but this was far from probable, considering the violence with which they engaged.*

But of all the religious ceremonies in this country, nothing surprised me so much as the absurd veneration which was paid to several kinds of animals, such as the cat, the dog, the hawk, the ibis, the crocodile, and others. Particular lands were appropriated for the maintenance of each species ; and the care of feeding and attending them was accounted the most honorable employment in the

* Herodotus

kingdom *. To these animals the inhabitants solemnly offered up their prayers; and with such profusion were those ridiculous deities entertained, that by one man, who had the care of a number of them, not less than a hundred talents were expended †. They were kept in consecrated enclosures, where their victuals consisted of the greatest dainties. The most usual food was the finest flour boiled in milk; cakes of several sorts made with honey; and the flesh of geese, either boiled or roasted ‡. Those which fed on raw meat were supplied with birds of different kinds ||.

* Herodotus. † Diodorus Sicul. ‡ Ibid. || Ibid.

The conduct of the Egyptians in the maintenance of those animals and of their own children, displayed a remarkable contrast. For while they lavished such exorbitant sums on the former, the latter were fed and cloathed at so small an expence, that from birth to the age of manhood, a boy seldom cost his father more than twenty drachms, or about thirteen shillings *. They went for the most part naked ; and their usual diet consisted of the stalks and roots of the plants which grew in the marshes †. This frugal

* Diodorus Sicul. † Ibid.

manner in which they brought up their children, was undoubtedly one great cause of the populousness of Egypt.

P. A. H.

C H A P. IV.

MURDER OF THE GOD APIS. GREAT
 CONSTERNATION IN EGYPT. A
 STRANGE DISCOVERY OF THE
 WICKEDNESS OF A PRIEST.

Whilst public sacrifices to animals and imaginary deities were celebrating in different quarters, the superstition of the country gave rise to a transaction of a very extraordinary nature. The god Apis, or the Sacred Ox, which was worshiped at Memphis, died suddenly; and, from several circumstances,

stances, an opinion was entertained that he had been carried off by poison. At the report of this incident the whole kingdom was thrown into consternation. A general mourning immediately took place; all public business was suspended, and even the temples were shut throughout the different provinces of Egypt*.

No attention was now paid to any thing but preparations for the funeral of the deceased god. The people assembled from all the provinces to be present at this extraordinary spectacle, which was celebrated in about a month after, with the utmost magni-

* Diodorus Sicul.

ficence.

ficence. Men who had witnessed the funerals of former deities of this species, which had died of old age, were astonished at the prodigious expenditure on the present occasion, when the public zeal in favor of the late Apis rose in proportion to the abhorrence universally entertained of the fate by which he had been extinguished. A reward of a thousand talents was proclaimed in all the towns of Egypt, to any person who should discover the perpetrator of the tremendous sacrilege.

After the celebration of the funeral, priests were dispatched into all the corners of the kingdom, in quest

of a successor to the deceased god.* The Apis was to be the calf of a cow incapable of bearing another, and no otherwise to be impregnated (as the Egyptians imagined) than by thunder. The marks which distinguished him were these. His body was black, except one square of white on the forehead. He had the figure of an eagle on his back; a double list of hair on his tail; and a knot like a beetle under his tongue.†

As soon as the priests who were employed in the enquiry had found a calf with these marks, the public

* Diodorus Sicul.

† Herodotus.

lamentation ceased, and they led the young Apis first into the city of Nile, where he was fed during forty days, and afterwards transported in a vessel with a golden cabin to Memphis*. During the time he remained in the city of Nile, women only were admitted into his presence. On this occasion the custom was, that they stood before him, lifted up their garment, and showed him their privities†; after which it was unlawful for them ever to see the new god.‡

The great reward which had been offered, soon produced a discovery of the steps which had led to the

* Diodorus.

† Ibid

‡ Ibid,

murder of the late Apis. This atrocious deed was traced to the chief priest in the city of Nile. It appeared in the sequel that he was a man of a libidinous disposition, and had been excited to this act with the view of beholding the women, and probably also of debauching some of them, when they should perform the above-mentioned ceremony in the presence of the new Apis. A servant belonging to the temple of Nicopolis declared upon oath, that he had been employed by the chief priest to carry a letter to the keeper of the sacred ox at Memphis; that the letter was accompanied with a large sum

sum of money; and that from several suspicious circumstances in the behaviour both of the priest and the keeper, as well as from the death of Apis, which happened in a short time after, he was confident that the correspondence related entirely to that transaction. The magistrate who received this information immediately dispatched proper officers to arrest the parties; and the keeper, on being taken into custody, made full confession of the fact.

In the mean time the usual ceremony was proceeding in the city of the Nile, and the chief priest was daily enjoying the gratification which
he

he expected to reap from his stratagem. When the order for apprehending him arrived, he was discovered in the interior part of the temple, in criminal intercourse with a lady of distinguished rank and beauty. They were immediately secured, and in a month after brought to trial.

C H A P. V.

AN EXTRAORDINARY TRIAL FOR
ADULTERY.

NO trial had ever so much excited the public attention as that of these two criminals, the priest and the lady. On the day appointed, Arfinoe swarmed with the multitude of inhabitants who impatiently waited for the issue of so extraordinary an enquiry.

The trial was held in the Labyrinth, where all important causes
were

judged*; and I had now an opportunity of beholding this celebrated structure, which had been intended as a pantheon, or universal temple of the Egyptian deities. It contained twelve magnificent palaces, answering to the twelve provinces of Egypt†. In each of them was a vast hall, with an equal number of doors opposite to each other; six opening to the north, and six to the south.‡ The number of chambers in this edifice was three thousand;|| in the lowermost of which were the sepulchres of the holy crocodiles,

* Herodotus.

† Diodorus Sicul.

‡ Herodotus.

|| Ibid.

and

and of several of the kings.* But what astonished me more than its prodigious magnitude, was the intricacy which prevailed through the whole. The passages between the chambers ran in directions so extremely various, that by nothing but such an expedient as the clue of Ariadne was it possible to unravel them.

The dignity of the tribunal before which the delinquents were to appear corresponded to the greatness of the occasion. It consisted of thirty-one judges, including the president, who wore about his neck a gold chain,

* Herodotus.

from

from which hung, enriched with precious stones, an emblem of truth *.

As soon as the judges had taken their seats, I procured a convenient place where I might sit during the whole of the trial. The priest was now expected to enter, when intelligence was brought that he was dangerously ill, and could not be produced before the assembly. It was whispered in the court, that he had taken a dose of poison the preceding night. The president gave orders that every possible expedient should be used for his recovery; and in the mean time that the

* Herodotus.

woman

woman (for this was his expression) should be brought to the bar.

As the history of the criminal transaction for which this trial was held, afforded the strongest reason to suspect that the priest was the instigator, the lady, though one of the parties, was called to give her evidence, with the view of confirming this fact. When she entered the court, her appearance was such as struck the spectators with admiration. She seemed to be about four or five and twenty years of age; a woman of a fine person and a beautiful face. As the laws of Egypt permitted no advocates or counsellors.

lors,* the only persons who spoke were the Chief Judge and the party. This being the most extraordinary trial ever known, I procured a faithful copy of it, and shall here recite it in the identical words which were used in the court.

Minutes of an Extraordinary Trial for Adultery, committed by the Priest of Nicopolis and Amasia, of the same city.

An oath being administered to the witness in the manner of the Egyptians, the trial commenced with the following interrogation.

Judge. Did you go to see Apis,

* Diodorus Sicul.

the

the Sacred Ox, at the city of the Nile?

Witness. Yes.

J. On what day was it you went?

W. On the day after he was brought to the temple.

J. Did you go alone, or with any other woman?

W. I went alone.

J. Had you ever seen the priest before that day?

W. Yes. I had seen him two or three times at my husband's house.

J. When you went in, did you shut the door?

W. No.

J. Did the priest shut it?

W. I believe he did a little after.

J. When you had gone into the temple where the sacred ox was, what did you do?

W. I presented myself before him, and lifted up my garment.

J. To what height did you lift up your garment?

W. Near to my navel.

J. Did you hold it up any time?

W. Not a great while.

J. Might it be a minute?

W. I believe it might be near a minute.

J. Is it usual for women to hold up their garments so long, when they present themselves before Apis?

W. I don't know. Very likely it might not be a minute.

J. How

J. How was the priest employed whilst you stood in this attitude?

W. He stood by me, on my right hand.

J. Did he say any thing all this time?

W. Yes, a few words.

J. Inform the court what he said.

W. He said I was the finest woman he had ever seen.

J. Did he say any thing more?

W. Not immediately.

J. At the time when he spoke the words you have repeated, what attitude was he in?

W. He had one of his arms round me.

J. How was his other hand employed? Did he touch you at all with the other?

W. I believe he did.

J. Where did he put it?—I desire you to answer my question.

W. I think it was on the top of my thigh.

J. On the top of your thigh? Did he do any thing else at this time?—Upon your oath inform the court what he did.

W. He took a kifs of me.

J. During these transactions, how did the god Apis conduct himself?

W. He tickled me all the time.

J. He tickled you all the time,
you

you say? What do you mean? Explain yourself.

W. Yes, he licked me with his tongue.

J. What part was it he licked? your hand?

W. No. I don't remember that he licked my hand.

J. What part then was it?—Speak out—Was it your thighs?

W. Yes.

J. About the same part, perhaps, where the priest laid his hand?

W. Yes, about the same part.

J. Whilst Apis was licking the top of your thighs, did he discover any signs of emotion?

F 3

W. He

W. He wagged his tail very much.

J. Did the priest say any thing whilst Apis was licking you?

W. I believe he did.

J. You believe he did. What was it he said?

W. He hoped I would comply with doing what the god suggested.

J. Silence!—These were his words precisely? Were they?

W. I think they were.

J. Upon this did the priest proceed to do any thing?

W. Yes, he laid me down on the floor.

J. Did you scream out at this time when he laid you down?

W. I

W. I believe not.

J. Did you suspect that he had any design of injuring you?

W. Yes, I suspected it.

J. So, then, though you suspected a bad design, you did not scream out?

W. I don't know that I did.

J. When the priest laid you down on the floor, with the intention, as you supposed, of committing the act of adultery, did you voluntarily acquiesce in his wicked purpose, without making any resistance?

W. No. I thought it improper.

J. What was it you thought im-

proper, the act of adultery, or the resistance ?

W. Both the act and the resistance.

J. What do you mean ? Could you think resistance to so heinous a crime improper ?

W. I was afraid of alarming Apis.

J. Silence !——When the priest then laid you down on the floor, and you made no resistance, are we to conclude that the act of adultery was perpetrated between you ?

W. Not quite.

J. Not quite ? Do you mean that it was not begun, or that it was not completed ?——Answer me this question. How long may it have been from the time that the priest laid you

you down, until the time that the people rushed into the temple?

W. I don't know.

J. You told the Court a little ago, that the time you stood before Apis, with your garment up near to your navel, might be about a minute; and that immediately after this the priest laid you down on the floor, with the intention, as you supposed, of committing the act of adultery. You have farther informed the Court, that you made no resistance. It is therefore exceedingly material in this cause, to know what time you lay on the floor.—But first let me ask you one question. When the priest

priest laid you down on the floor, what did he do. Did he lie down also?

W. Yes.

J. In what attitude did he place himself?

W. He lay down upon me.

J. Now I desire you will recollect what time you lay in this situation. Might it be two, or three, or four, or five minutes, or more? Specify the time to the Court, as nearly as you can.

W. I cannot say what time. But it was not long.

J. Recollect yourself a little more.

Do

Do you think it might be five minutes?

W. I don't doubt but it might.

J. During this time then did the priest commit upon you the act of adultery?

W. I was not perfectly sensible all the time.

J. Do you mean to be understood that you do not know whether he committed it or not?

W. I cannot say as to that.

J. Attend, woman! I desire to be informed, upon your oath, whether, whilst you lay on the floor, and the priest upon you, he did not enter your body. That is the point.—

Speak

Speak out.—Eh ! — Lift up your voice.

W. I believe he did.

J. That is a fact in which you could not be deceived. You believe he did. You are positive as to that fact ? That he fairly entered ?

W. No. I don't know what you mean by fairly.

J. I find there is no coming to the bottom of the affair by this Examination. Call in the witnesses.
[*To the Cryer.*]

C H A P.

C H A P. VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

EXTRAORDINARY DEFENCE OF
THE PRIEST. ANOTHER UNCOM-
MON SUIT.

THE examination of the lady being concluded, one of the witnesses was called into the Court ; and having taken the oath, he was ordered by the Chief Judge to relate the situation in which the parties were discovered; His narrative was as follows.

“ May

“ May it please your worship, when we burst into the apartment of the temple where the sacred ox was, the woman was lying flat on the floor, and the priest upon her. The garments of both were up as far as their navels. He was between her thighs, *Laska Maska*,† please your worship: We saw them very plainly.”

This testimony being confirmed by three other witnesses, nothing more was now requisite towards legal conviction, than that the priest should be heard in his own defence, respecting not only this

† An expression of the same import with
Rem in Re.

charge,

charge, but the murder of Apis, for which he was also tried.

He was by this time so much recovered as to be fit for appearing in Court, and was accordingly brought to the bar; when he made a defence, the most extraordinary that occurs in the Judicial proceedings of any country.

Speech of the Priest in his own Defence.

Learned Judges,

Fully sensible of the public odium under which I have at present the misfortune to labor, it affords me the utmost satisfaction to have the opportunity

tunity of appearing before this solemn tribunal in the cause for which I am now cited. And I hope the greater credit will be given to this declaration, when I inform the Court that it is far from my intention to disprove, in the smallest degree, either of the accusations which have been exhibited against me. I trust they are both too well supported by evidence to require any refutation on my part, or to admit of any uncertainty upon yours. I ingenuously avow that I committed the acts (I call them not crimes) with which I am charged in the indictment. But I hope to convince this Court, that, instead

stead of being therefore deemed worthy of condemnation; I shall not only receive the most honorable acquittal, but the universal approbation of my country.

I shall begin with the charge of murder; and I appeal to the great god Osiris for the truth of what I shall affirm.

One night about four months ago, I had a most extraordinary dream. I dreamt, Learned Judges, that the god Apis had devoured the whole land of Egypt, with all its inhabitants! Dreadfully ominous as this dream appeared to me next morning, I thought not, at that time, of tak-

ing any measures in consequence of it. The following night however I had precisely the same dream : and, strange to relate ! it was again repeated the third night. I then could not help considering it as an admonition sent from heaven, to prevent, by every means possible, the universal destruction of my country. I could see only one method of effecting this important object : and that was by procuring the death of the god Apis. The idea struck me with horror. I prayed fervently to all the powers of heaven, to enlighten my mind in this dreadful emergency ; and to inspire me with resolution for carrying
into

into effect whatever means the divine illumination should suggest. The more I prayed, the more did I feel my mind impelled to the perpetration of what I had meditated. And by a vision, which appeared to me two nights after, I was confirmed in my purpose.

Permit me, Learned Judges, to relate in a few words this extraordinary incident. As I lay upon my bed awake, still meditating on the interpretation of the dream, there appeared to me a figure as of an angel, who addressed me in these words: "It is the will of the great god Osiris that thou shalt execute the purpose

which has entered thy heart. He has weighed Apis in the balance, and finds him far inferior in value to the lives of a whole people. Fear not therefore to proceed". A divine command, delivered so explicitly, and involving in its issue the preservation of the whole people of Egypt, was too sacred to be withstood. I instantly made preparations for carrying it into execution, and happily effected it.

I now proceed, Learned Judges, to the next article of the charge, namely, the act of adultery; respecting which I am confident that my justification will prove equally irrefragable.

fragable. That I did commit the act of adultery, is established by the evidence beyond all possibility of doubt. But that I did not perform it from any motive of concupiscence, I solemnly affirm in the presence of this court, and of the great god Osiris. I was happy in the possession of a wife whom I loved; and I could have no inducement to indulge any criminal gratification. The truth is, I was impelled to it at the irresistible instigation of Apis, who made known to me his pleasure by every demonstration except speech. And I solemnly declare, that during the whole of the act, he frisked in the most ex-

traordinary manner, as if exulting at the alacrity with which I had obeyed, and the zeal with which I was executing his commands.

Having thus briefly and ingenuously related to the court the history of both transactions, I shall make no other observation upon them, than that they were performed from the purest motives of religion and public virtue which can actuate human conduct. Towards the gods, I have acquitted myself, as became my sacerdotal function, with the most dutiful obedience; and to my country I have performed so signal, so meritorious a service, as no mortal, since
the

the foundation of the world, was ever known to atchieve. But I have no inclination to magnify what must be sufficiently evident to the wisdom of this court; and I therefore appeal, with equal satisfaction and confidence, to the incorruptible, the inflexible, the indispenfible justice of the learned judges of Egypt.

However ftrange this defence may appear, it was peculiarly adapted to work upon the minds of a people deeply immerfed in fuperftition; efpecially when joined not only to the feeming earneftnefs and fincerity of the man, but to a well diffebled confidence, in which he excelled all

I had ever seen. He had no sooner finished his harangue, than the people testified their sentiments by a general murmur of approbation, which continued a little time. At length the chief judge delivered his opinion, and was followed by the other judges in succession; when it appeared that the bench was not uninfected with the prejudices of the audience. For out of thirty-one members, of which the tribunal consisted, only seventeen concurred with the president in finding the defendant guilty. For the act of adultery, the sentence directed that he should have his private parts
cut

cut off;* and for the murder of the Sacred Ox, that he should immediately after suffer death.

Another cause, of a very uncommon kind, was tried by the judges the same day, and deserves to be related. An Egyptian youth, smitten with the beauty of a celebrated courtesan, had entreated her to indulge him with a night's lodging; but the terms which she demanded were so high, that either he could not, or did not choose to grant them. His imagination however was so much set upon the object, that he dreamt next night he had completely enjoyed her.

* Diodorus Sicul.

The story coming to her ears, she raised a suit against him for the money, upon the allegation that he had obtained his desire. The ingenuity of the Chief Judge was on this occasion conspicuous. He desired the young man to bring into the court the money which had been specified, and to count it so that the plaintiff might hear it chink. This being accordingly done, the Judge addressed her in the following terms: "One fancy is as good as another. You are now paid in your own coin; and the cause is therefore determined."* The audience expressed

* Plutarch in Vita Demetrii.

great

great satisfaction at this decision; but the plaintiff, totally unabashed, went out of the court exclaiming that she would appeal to the Queen.

C H A P. VII.

INTOLERABLE ANNOYANCES FROM
 SUPERSTITION. CURIOUS AC-
 COUNT OF MAIDEN EGGS.

DURING the time I had hitherto
 been in Egypt, my attention
 was almost entirely occupied with a
 series of private disasters, or of public
 tumults; and certainly no other
 country was ever so much exposed to
 casualties of both those kinds. Na-
 tional festivities were frequent and
 disorderly,

disorderly, but of the scenes of local uproar there was no intermission. In every city, in every town, crowds of men and women were perpetually ranging the streets in separate parties, with their faces and heads bedaubed with mud *, and beating their naked breasts †, in lamentation of some extraordinary misfortune. Had it not been for their great number, I should naturally have taken them for persons in a state of real distraction. On enquiring into the cause of such behaviour, I found that they had lost some near relation, or, what was considered as yet a more melancholy

* Herodotus.

† Ibid.

accident,

accident, that a dog, cat, or some other sacred animal had died. The great populousness of Egypt rendered the former of these occurrences extremely frequent; and from the vast multitude of divinities, which had shorter lives than the human species, the latter was continually operating in every part of the kingdom.

So general were the causes and effects both of natural and superstitious sorrow, that wherever I went, the people almost universally were employed in elegiac ceremonies, or exhibited in their persons evident marks of recent affliction. If they were not
howling

howling and beating their breasts, they had sacrificed their brows in lamentation of a cat *, or all the hair on their body to the superior divinity of a dog †. But instead of disconsolate individuals, or straggling parties of mourners, nothing was more common than to meet in the streets with the funeral of some of the divinities. Universal lamentation then ensued, and the inhabitants seemed to vie with each other who should emit the loudest cries, and thump their breasts most severely. If to avoid those scenes of uproar, I walked along the high roads, the chance

* Herodotus. † Ibid.

was

was a thousand to one that I should meet with the same annoyance, or if any keeper of the sacred animals was passing along that I should be obliged to pay him numberless marks of respect, even to the ceremony of bending the knee*. In short, go where I would, the hideous form of superstition stared me in the face at every step: and if to escape I took shelter in a house, even in the house it was ready to receive me, amidst piles of dead bodies (mummies), some of which had been preserved in the family during hundreds of years†.

To avoid this variety of persecu-

* Diodorus Sicul. † Herodotus.

tion,

tion, I used frequently to walk into the fields, where, during the months of January and February, Egypt afforded a most delightful prospect. At this season, the whole kingdom seemed like a fine meadow richly enameled with flowers. Herds and flocks of cattle, with an infinite number of husbandmen and gardeners, were scattered over the plain on every side; and blossoms of the orange and other trees, which were in prodigious quantity, diffused such a fragrance in the air as I hardly ever perceived in any other country.

Whilst I was one day speaking with some shepherds, I observed two of them with each an egg in their

left hand ; and on asking the reason, I was told that they meant to hatch them *. This was not the only artificial method used for the same purpose in Egypt. A dunghill was a frequent recourse. But the most common practice was to put the eggs into an oven, the heat of which was carefully adapted to the temperature of incubation †. I was also told by a gentleman with whom I was acquainted, and whose veracity I had no cause to question, that it was not unusual for young women to suspend eggs at the top of their thighs. With regard to this custom he related the

* Athenæus.

† Herodotus.

following

following story, which fell under his own observation.

It being considered as a sign of the good disposition of young women, when they showed an inclination to carry an egg in the manner above-mentioned, those girls who wished to please their mother, would often request an egg for the purpose of hatching it. One girl, to gratify her mother still more, said to her one day, "Mamma, I can carry two eggs : that I can, Mamma." The mother, highly delighted with a proposal which she regarded as an indication of virtue, accordingly gave her two eggs, and the girl, in her presence, applied one

to each of her groins. The mother hoped, that from a regard to those brittle appendages, her daughter, of whom perhaps she had been suspicious, was determined against admitting too close familiarity with a lover. The girl however being of an amorous disposition, and knowing the inconvenience which might arise from carrying the eggs about her person, deposited them secretly in some camel's dung, and put in their place two small bladders distended with air. This stratagem served to support the deception of the mother, whom the daughter would often request to feel the eggs under her garment ;

ment ; and it exposed her to no hazardous collision in case of any rude encounter with a man.

The young woman communicating the invention to some of her companions, it was at this time practised by many girls of easy virtue. But the contrivance could not subsist more than a few years : for when those girls should have daughters of their own, any attempt at such a trick might be followed with immediate detection. The bladders used in this manner were called " Maiden Eggs."

C H A P. VIII.

**GREAT LAMENTATION ON THE
DEATH OF THE KING. HIS TRIAL
BEFORE THE INTERMENT,**

WHILST Egypt refounded with
the murder of Apis, a new
incident of public importance threw
the kingdom into fresh agitation,
This was the death of the Sovereign,
who expired at the royal palace in
Memphis about a fortnight after the
late trial. The whole nation now
went into mourning, and the people
univer.

universally tore their garments *. The temples were shut †, all sacrifices prohibited ‡; nor could any festival be celebrated during eighty days. Both sexes wore a girdle of fine linen under their breast; and with dirt upon their heads, went about in bodies of two or three hundred, singing twice a day mournful ditties in praise of the late king ||. During those processions it was unlawful to taste of any meat or wine, or to indulge in any gratification §.

Great preparations having been made for the interment, the body

* Diodorus Sicul. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. || Ibid.
§ Ibid.

was brought in a coffin, on the last of the eighty days, and laid down at the entrance of the Royal Sepulchre. The funeral procession, which was extremely pompous, now halted, whilst an oration in praise of the King was delivered by the high priest of Memphis. On this occasion, any person who pleased was permitted to accuse the deceased; and if any one or more accusations, essentially affecting the character, should be well supported, the royal corpse might be refused the honor of public sepulture *.

* Diodorus Sicul.

The

The oration at this time was highly panegyrical, but different parts of it were variously received by the multitude; some testifying their approbation with shouts of applause, whilst others expressed their disgust by groans and tumultuous exclamations. After finishing the discourse, the high-priest recapitulated the virtues of the king in short sentences, with the view, I presumed, not so much to collect the real sentiments of the people, as to afford an opportunity for tampering with their prejudices and passions. He proceeded in the following manner,

“ He

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“ He

“ He was a decent prince, and regularly attended the public sacrifices.”

“ He was just and faithful in all his transactions.”

“ He was ever kind and merciful to his people.”

“ He expended more money annually on the support of sacred dogs, cats, wolves, crocodiles, &c. than most, if not all, of his predecessors.”

“ His liberality to the priesthood was exemplary, and such as became a great King. Indeed his liberality was universal.”

Here the people gave a loud groan, and a voice was heard to say,

“ He

“ He may have been liberal to the clergy, but never was to others. No, No. He must not be praised for liberality.”

“ He loved his people with the affection of a father. Dear prince! How loving he was of his subjects !”

Another voice now exclaimed,
“ Was it of his male or female subjects ?”

“ He was loving of all his subjects.”

“ He was an excellent husband.”

“ He was an indulgent father.”

“ His temperance befitted a King.”

There

There now arose a general cry,
 “No, no. Not temperate.”

“His continence has never been
 impeached.”

Here one of the crowd exclaimed,
 “Then I impeach it now. For he
 once attempted to ravish my wife;
 and I know a neighbour of mine,
 whose daughter he debauched five
 and twenty years ago.”

Another person answered, “I re-
 member the facts of which this man
 speaks, but they were not committed
 by the king. They were perpetrated
 by one of the royal attendants, who
 resembled the king both in person
 and dress.”

I had

I had heard much of the impartiality with which the Egyptians, in general, conducted the investigation into the characters of the dead, and even into those of their princes ; but from the instance which now fell under my observation, I think that this part of their polity has been represented greatly to the advantage. This celebrated inquest was in fact nothing else than a solemn farce. An outward show of strictness was industriously preserved ; but in every step of the enquiry, the retainers of the Court, or persons hired by them, were constantly in readiness to repel the force of every accusation. When
any

any clamor arose from the multitude against any particular parts of the eulogium made by the priest, I overheard him twice say to a person who stood near him, "We must have another touch at it."

The method he practised was to pass to other subjects, until the runners of the Court should have time to exert their influence, either by persuasion or otherwise, in favor of the royal character. The priest would then overhaul the former panegyric; and in this stage it generally obtained the acquiescence of the multitude. The better to secure the appearance of public approbation, it was usual
for

for the domestics of the deceased king, and their friends, to plant themselves nearest to the priest, who also took care to adapt his voice to the exigence. In pronouncing any part of the eulogium which was not likely to be contradicted, he would bellow in such a manner as to be heard by many thousands of the multitude: but wherever the disapprobation of the crowd might be apprehended, he lowered his tone, so as to be heard only by the circle of retainers on whose applauses he could depend.

When the several parts of the panegyric had thus received, at least
in

in appearance, the public sanction, the priest cried aloud, "Praise be to Osiris! The virtues of our late sovereign are fully established." The funeral procession was now resumed, and the royal corpse was deposited in the Labyrinth, among the former kings of Egypt.

To any stranger who stood at a distance from the priest during this posthumous trial, it might seem to be conducted with great strictness; but I had seen too much of the artifice which was practised upon the occasion to be rendered the dupe of general credulity. It is said that many of the Egyptian kings have, in consequence

quence of this trial, been denied the honor of a public interment.* Should this assertion be well founded, I may affirm, that either those princes have been notoriously flagitious, or that the priests and courtiers who conducted the funerals, were extremely destitute of address. A moderate acquaintance with human nature may convince us, that there could be no great difficulty in procuring the public sanction to the character of a prince who was not remarkably vicious. The people in general are disposed to entertain a veneration for royalty; and in Egypt this loyal af-

* Diodorus Sicul.

fection had always been particularly predominant. A public lamentation of eighty days was also a circumstance, which might be sufficient to impress upon the minds of the people an opinion of the worth of a prince who appeared, during so long a period, to be universally regretted by the nation. We know, besides, that of all human events, the death of the object most effectually extinguishes those passions which prompt to the diminution of another's fame; and though they might continue to operate when supported by an equality, or nearly an equality of rank, yet no such relation as favored the impeachment of character, either from motives of
 envy

envy or resentment, could exist between subjects and their sovereign. To these considerations I may add, that little inducement to accusation could arise from principles of patriotism, when the influence of the example on the succeeding king, which was now the only advantage of the institution, would be extremely precarious. For all these reasons I am inclined to be of opinion, that when the character of a king was impeached at those singular trials, the charges were, for the most part, either exhibited from motives of interest which required gratification, or were the temporary ebullition of

the populace, capricious in displaying a power which they could only exercise over a sovereign whose authority was no more.

CHAP.

C H A P. IX.

INUNDATION OF THE NILE. GREAT
 FECUNDITY OCCASIONED BY IT.
 ANECDOTE OF A YOUNG LADY.
 A HUMAN SACRIFICE OFFERED
 TO THE RIVER. EXTRAORDI-
 NARY APPEARANCE OF EGYPT.

THE season had now almost ar-
 rived when the annual inunda-
 tion of the Nile was about to com-
 mence. This was a phenomenon
 not more singular in respect of its

stated returns, than with regard to the effects which it produced. The slime brought down with it gave such fertility to the land as rendered the use of manure quite unnecessary.* The Egyptians had neither the trouble of ploughing, digging, or breaking the clods. When the river retired, nothing more was necessary than to mingle a little sand with the earth in some places, for the purpose of abating its strength. Almost the only business of the farmer was to sow: and this being done, he put his hogs to tread the seed into the ground; expecting the harvest with-

* Diodorus Sicul.

out any farther care. When this season came, he again let in the hogs to shake the grain out of the ear, and had no farther trouble then to gather and lay up the corn.*

It was remarkable that the fecundity caused by the inundation of the Nile affected not only the vegetable but the animal kingdom.† The cows almost always brought two calves at a time; the sheep yeanned twice a year; and a goat was often seen followed by no less than four kids.‡

The new waters, whether drank or used in the way of a bath, never

* Diodorus Sicul. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

failed to render the women fruitful. They usually conceived in July or August, and were delivered in April or May.* Sometimes they were delivered of four children at a birth; sometimes of seven.† This fact being well known, it was a common thing for ladies who lived in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, and were desirous of having children, to make a voyage to Egypt with their husbands during the time of the inundation.

One day when I happened to be in company with a handsome young lady, I was speaking of this extraor-

* Aristotle.

† Diodorus Sicul.

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dinary effect of the waters of the Nile in causing impregnation.

“Curse on its fecundity! answered she laughing; a young woman is not safe to make use of it.” “A maiden egg is no protection against the Nile,” replied I. “What! said she, have you heard of the Maiden Eggs?”

“I should be extremely sorry to know that so ingenious a contrivance had escaped my observation,” answered I. “It is my opinion, said she, that you carry a Maiden Egg.”

A declaration so directly calculated to provoke hostilities threw me into embarrassment. For ever since the wrench which I had received from

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one of the physicians, I had not even the power of revenging an insult on my own virility. Happily for me our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of some visitors; and ever afterwards I took particular care not to expose myself to the hazard of a private interview with this lively young lady, for whom at the same time I had a great regard. The reason why I mention this anecdote is to show how rapidly the invention of the Maiden Eggs had been propagated amongst the young women of Egypt. The place of its origin was Antylla near Alexandria; and the part of the country, where

where the above-mentioned young lady had always resided was distant almost two hundred miles. Antylla was famous for the excellence of its wine, the revenue arising from which was appropriated by the Kings of Egypt towards furnishing their Queens with girdles*. Had it been expended in supplying all the young women of the province with girdles, which, until their marriage, should be loosened by none but their mothers, it would have afforded a more effectual preservative of their virginity than Maiden Eggs.

When the water of the Nile had risen to a certain height, it was let in

* Athenæus.

upon

upon the lands by cutting down the dam of a great canal at Bulâk; an operation which was always performed with much solemnity. I went thither on the day of the festival, in company with several persons who were to be present at the transaction. The spot where the people assembled was on the west bank of the Nile; near the brink of which stood a round eminence, flat on the top, and defended on the part towards the river by a wall about four feet high. This area was allotted for the priests, with the principal men who attended the ceremony; and within this circle I had also the honor of being

ing admitted. I thence enjoyed a view of the whole multitude, which seemed to be every where occupied in rejoicing. Some played on the tabor, some on the pipe; others rattled with the sistrum; many of them sung verses in praise of the fertility of Egypt; and round the skirts of the crowd, I perceived the same sort of gambols which I had formerly seen in my progress to Bubastis.

On the area where I stood, I was surprised to see two beautiful children, one a boy and the other a girl, about five or six years of age. They were both naked, with garlands of flowers round their heads; and close
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by them was a pile of flowers, made up in a variety of fantastic forms. The ceremony began with throwing the flowers into the river. This was performed in rotation by all the priests who were present. At every throw, the priest who was the actor repeated aloud, "Accept of this offering from grateful Egypt, O best of Rivers!" The company within the circle now gave a shout of applause, which was instantly echoed by the whole multitude.

I had by this time begun to forebode the approaching fate of the two children; and my conjecture soon proved to be well founded. When

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the pile of flowers was exhausted, the high priest of Memphis lifted the boy upon a stool, which was placed on the area for the purpose, and kissing him, pronounced these words, "My dear boy, present the thanks of Egypt to the Nile." The same ceremony was observed by all the priests in succession. The high priest of Heliopolis then taking hold of the girl, placed her upon another stool at the side of the boy, and kissing her also, said, "My dear girl, present the thanks of Egypt to the Nile." This salutation being repeated by all the priests as before,

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the two high priests took up the children in their arms at the same time; the priest of Memphis taking the boy, and the priest of Heliopolis the girl; when both of them pronouncing the address which had been used at the throwing of the flowers, they tossed the innocent victims, who by a scream now manifested their terror, from the precipice into the river. *

Never was so barbarous an action

* The custom of sacrificing human victims to the Nile, is said to have continued until the Turks made themselves masters of Egypt.

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perpetrated with such insensibility. Not a sigh of sympathy, betrayed the least emotion in the spectators. How the two children had been procured for this purpose, I could not learn. This was the first time I had ever seen a human sacrifice, or any sacrifice, performed without fire; but Egypt was peculiarly entitled to the denomination of the Land of Wonders.* After the sacrifice was performed, a signal being given, the dam was opened by workmen appointed for that office; and the river burst into the canal with great impetuosity. Nothing now could be

* Herodotus.

heard but shouts of joy and triumph. “Welcome, king of rivers! Welcome, glorious Nile!” And for some minutes the whole kingdom seemed to resound with the incessant acclamations of the multitude.

On this excursion I had an opportunity to see, on the banks of the Nile, many of the Sphinxes; those symbolical representations, which derived their origin from Egypt. They were figures cut in stone, and had the head of a woman with the body of a lion; signifying that the Nile began to swell in the months of July and August, when the sun passes through the signs of Leo and Virgo.

Virgo.* One of them in particular, cut entirely out of the rock, was remarkable for its prodigious dimensions. The body was one hundred and forty-three feet in length†, well proportioned; and the circumference of the head one hundred and two feet.‡ It was thought to be the sepulchre of king Amasis||; but for this opinion I could find no positive authority.

The waters of the Nile now daily spread over the kingdom, and the country exhibited a very remarkable appearance. It seemed like a wide sea, out of which arose a vast number

* Lucan. † Pliny. ‡ Ibid. || Ibid.

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of towns, villages, and turrets, intermixed with groves and fruit-trees, of which, at last, only the tops could be perceived. On account of this annual inundation, the towns and villages were all built either on some natural eminences, or, what was most generally the case, upon mounds erected with great labor. Between many of them were causeways, by which, or by boats, the whole communication in the country was now carried on.

* Herodotus.

C H A P. X.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LEARNING
AND POLITY OF THE EGYPTIANS.

I Had for some time intended to visit the Pyramids, and the city of Thebes, so famous for the magnificence of its buildings, but after the ceremony at Bulâk, I was invited to Hieropolis, to spend the season of the inundation; and I had the stronger inducement to accept of this friendly overture, as I might

have an opportunity of being introduced to the priest of that city, of whom I heard great commendation. For having now satisfied my curiosity with respect to most of the principal objects in Egypt, I was extremely desirous of knowing the state of learning, for which this country was celebrated, and of comparing it with that of the College of Chaldeans at Babylon.

Soon after my arrival at Hieropolis I was accordingly made acquainted with this venerable person, for whom, at first sight, I conceived a great partiality; and I believe the affection was mutual. Observing that

that I discovered an uncommon thirst for knowledge, he was at no small pains to inform me of every thing respecting the sciences which were cultivated by the Egyptians. But I was soon convinced, that notwithstanding the reputation of learning, which this people had acquired, they had in reality made very little progress in any useful research. Geometry was the only science which they understood in a tolerable degree. For, though they made observations on the stars, they were ignorant of those principles which are indispensable for erecting a rational system of astronomy. And in the

knowledge of any additional science, if we except the visionary and fallacious doctrines in which they rivalled the Chaldeans, they were equally deficient with other nations.

One circumstance was peculiar to the Egyptians, and, if I mistake not, proved the cause of that celebrity which they universally obtained. The priests, beside the common alphabet used in the ordinary affairs of life, had a symbolical character appropriated to subjects of science.* This being a hereditary possession in their families, and accessible only to the priesthood, it furnished them

* Herodotus.

with

with the means not only of concealing from the world the knowledge which they had really acquired, but of imposing upon mankind by a fallacious display of learning which had no existence. The pretensions to knowledge could not be disproved which were never submitted to investigation; and ignorance might safely bid defiance to detection, when the veil of mystery within which it lay concealed was impenetrable.

I will venture to affirm, that under the management even of the most learned of the priesthood, this boasted symbolical character was absolutely incapable of accommodation to the purposes

purposes of science. For, admitting
 that the representation which it af-
 forded of ideas was not both too ar-
 bitrary and ambiguous to be univer-
 sally intelligible in any definite signi-
 fication, yet the language must have
 been extremely circumscribed, which
 afforded no expression for any other
 ideas than such as could be repre-
 sented by the pictures of material
 objects, numerous as they might
 be to any native of the most exten-
 sive observation in Egypt. Such a
 character, so far from being useful,
 was utterly inadequate to every exi-
 gence of precision. It could neither
 mark the copulation nor disjunction
 of

of ideas. It could express neither prepositive nor adverbial signification. In a word, it was incapable of describing any determinate relations of ideas, and could never attempt to delineate the abstract evolutions of sentiment.

To what purpose then, it may be asked, did the Egyptian priests make use of this symbolical character? The answer is obvious: they used it for the purpose of that priestcraft which in those times, universally disgraced the principles of men who subsisted by popular superstition. To this I will add another reason. The Egyptians were always addicted to
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an ostentation of mystery: they excited the astonishment of the world by their pyramids, which, though built as royal sepulchres, never included the ashes of any king; and they affected to construct a language, which notwithstanding its arrogated superiority, contained not a tittle of any science.

The polity of the ancient Egyptians has been no less the object of admiration than the supposed learning of the priesthood; but from the observations which I made in the country, I think that the excellence of their constitution has been greatly exaggerated. Perhaps the most salutary

tary of all their laws was that which related to the celebrated trial of the dead. But admitting that this practice had actually a beneficial influence on the morals of the people, the institution of it proceeded not so much from any superior legislative wisdom, as from the universal prejudice of the nation. The greatest ambition amongst them was, that their bodies should be preserved as entire as possible to the end of the world; and nothing therefore could offer greater violence to their fondest hope, than to be denied the privilege of interment.

But in my opinion, this singular
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mode of trial is a strong proof that the administration of criminal justice in Egypt was extremely imperfect. If men had committed crimes for which it could be deemed proper to deprive them of what the Egyptians held as the most valuable of all human privileges, why were they not brought to a legal trial? was it consistent with common justice that men should be condemned upon any accusation when they could not be heard in their own defence? or was it equitable to punish with eternal infamy offences which had not been thought of sufficient magnitude to justify the immediate cognizance of the laws?

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In every light in which this trial can be viewed, I must consider it as an absurd violation of the most sacred rights of mankind, and the resource of a legislature indisputably feeble and capricious.

But if the enforcement of morality amongst the Egyptians required such an institution as was unknown to any other people, the necessity of that restraint affords a strong presumption that their polity was defective in other parts. I am well supported by the evidence of history when I affirm, that no nation was ever less exposed than Egypt to the perpetration of those crimes which prove most
injuriously

injurious to society. The extreme fertility of the land, and the simplicity of cloathing, precluded the usual temptations to rapine and theft; whilst the unlimited number of wives in which men were indulged, and the general practice of early marriage, equally tended to prevent the unlawful commerce of the sexes. If in such a situation, therefore, the Egyptians required the most forcible inducement to moral conduct, to what principle in their natural or political constitution ought we to ascribe this necessity? They were not more disposed to voluptuousness from the temperature of the climate than the inhabitants

inhabitants of many other countries. On this subject, there is some reason to suspect, that the morals of Egypt were corrupted by a cause which has generally been considered as productive of salutary effects. I mean the practice of introducing the figure of a dead person at entertainments. That the object of this custom was to promote, and not restrain festivity, or rather intoxication, is evident from the words with which the ceremony was accompanied: “ Look upon this, and be merry ; for such as this is, shalt thou be when thou art dead ;” * and it is farther confirmed

* Herodotus.

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by the acknowledged intemperance to which the practice was rendered subservient. The Egyptians were remarkably addicted to drinking;* and they ate every night of boiled cabbage, as a preparative for the greater indulgence of their favorite vice.†

In subjecting men to the employment of the distaff, and other domestic offices, whilst the women alone performed all business without doors,‡ the polity of Egypt was a direct inversion of the laws of nature. By this preposterous custom the men became so effeminate, that in less

* Herodotus. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

than

than forty years after I was in the country, they were shamefully vanquished by an inferior army of Persians, and indeed became the prey of every subsequent enemy who invaded them. It is said of Sesostris that he erected in Syria several stones, bearing upon them a representation of the private parts of a woman,* as a reproach on the imbecility of his enemies; but one might almost be induced to suspect an error in history, which has converted into a sarcasm on foreign nations what was meant as a memorial of female valor; that the victories of this celebrated

* Herodotus

prince were obtained not by the men, but the women of Egypt.

The custom of all trades being hereditary* was also liable to strong objections. Though it suited economy, and seemed to favor proficiency in the various arts, it supported a restraint detrimental to the efforts of genius, and placed thousands of the people in situations for which they were unqualified by nature. With regard to the singular law which prescribed that every part of the body should be the province of a particular physician,† I had reason

* Herodotus. † Ibid.

to execrate it to the latest hour of my present transmigration.

When I consider all these circumstances, and the rude severity of the Egyptian punishments, I shall never admit, notwithstanding the claims of this people to high antiquity, that they afforded any example of that political wisdom which distinguished, in all other countries, the periods of refined civilization. Their religion was the most odious mass of superstition ever invented by the human mind. Exclusive of geometry, and some astronomical observations, their learning, with all its ostentation, I affirm it, was but ignorance in

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disguise; and their polity, their boasted polity, had its foundations in extravagant caprice. The Egyptians nevertheless have had the peculiar fortune not only to impose upon contemporary nations, but even to be venerated by posterity. That eternity which they wished with ardor to their own natural bodies, they have secured to the fame of their country. The wisdom of the Egyptians has been echoed from age to age. It is a mighty name, like the pyramids of the nation, but is in fact no more than a name; and I shall now inform the world of the means by which it arose.

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Great populousness, and facility of subsistence have ever been regarded as the surest signs of a flourishing nation. These objects being, in general, attainable only by wise regulations of government, the countries in which they are most conspicuous are therefore supposed to enjoy a happy system of polity. Egypt was remarkable both for populousness and plenty of provisions: on which account it acquired the reputation of transcendent excellence in respect of its customs and municipal laws. But the inference which in all other cases

was just, coincided not with truth when applied to the particular circumstances of Egypt. This kingdom was indebted for its great prosperity to the annual inundation of the Nile, which not only fertilized the land to an astonishing degree, but rendered the women so extremely fruitful*; that propagation went on at an amazing rate; I doubt not, without requiring half the conjugal activity exerted in all other countries. In this manner the beneficial effects, which proceeded entirely from the inundation of

* Diodorus Sicul. Aristotle.

the Nile, were erroneously ascribed by inattentive observers to the superior polity of Egypt.

C H A P. XI.

THE PANTHEON AT HIEROPOLIS.

STRANGE INCIDENTS. GREAT
DISTRESS.

AFTER my introduction to the priest of Hieropolis, not a day passed without my visiting the pontifical apartments; for I was determined to improve this valuable opportunity in acquiring the most exact information relative to the hieroglyphical repositories, and the strange superstition

superstition of Egypt. On all the subjects of enquiry, except one, my curiosity was readily gratified with the most explicit and satisfactory communications; but it was not until after repeated expressions of desire, modestly though earnestly intimated, that I was able to bring my amiable instructor to any explanation on that point. What I mean is an account of the enormous superstition of the Egyptians. I was persuaded however that his reserve proceeded from no other cause than a delicacy of sentiment. His penetration had already ascertained my principles sufficiently to know that I was not the
friend

friend of any idolatrous religion ; and I had every reason to believe that our opinions on the subject were congenial.

After a procrastination of several days, he addressed me in the following terms. “ I perceive, my dear youth, your ardent curiosity to be made acquainted with the religion of this kingdom. I only wish I could give such an account of it as might afford satisfaction both to you and myself ; but sorry am I to say, that the sensibility of us both must be affected with equal pain by the narrative. I was born in this country the son of a priest, and was obliged,
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by indispensible custom to be educated in the function of my father;* but my judgment rejects with horror the superstition of Egypt; and though I must conform to the unparalleled idolatry of the nation, my understanding acknowledges, and my heart adores but one Supreme Power, the great Creator of the universe. Having made this declaration, I shall now, to satisfy your curiosity, lead you into the pantheon, where you will behold the most humiliating proofs of the degradation of reason that the world can afford."

Fetching then a deep sigh, he

* Herodotus.

opened

opened the door of the apartment, and I entered with a horror which I had not felt even in the Mecashphim at Babylon. To give a detail of the numerous images, and embalmed animals which occupied this Pandemonium, would fill many pages with the most hideous materials that ever were committed to writing. My hair stood on end at the sight of a variety of objects, to which the whole people of an extensive kingdom bowed their knees in adoration. I soon quitted the loathsome scene, and returned to my venerable friend, who, I perceived, was glad that I had passed so little time in such company.

pany. “As the religion of this country can only afford you disgust, said he, allow me to show you something that is worthy the purity of a temple. Here is an excellent compendium of true religion and morality, by adhering to which we may secure the eternal favor and protection of the omnipotent God. I gave a copy of it many years ago to my son Polydore, who I hope is now sensible of its value.” Saying these words, he put the Compendium into my hand, and, on looking at it, I found it to be a copy of what I had received from my father on the banks of the Araxes. Astonished at this incident,

incident, I immediately exclaimed,
 “ my dear father ! I believe I am
 your Polydore. Are you Laertes
 who was born on the banks of the
 Pactolus, and afterwards settled in
 Armenia ? ” “ My dear ! I am that
 Laertes, said he ; and are you my
 Polydore ! ” “ I am, my dear father,”
 answered I. “ O ! My dear son !
 replied he, and do I find my Poly-
 dore in Telemachus ? Was ever joy
 like this ! O ! now my heart feels
 all a father’s transport ! My dear,
 my darling son ! ” Just as we were
 embracing each other, and uttering
 exclamations of reciprocal affection,
 a person behind us cried out, So ! so !
 then

then you are married ! my youth. I thought there was some such reason for your staying so long in Egypt. And that is your father-in-law ? is it ?” I knew it to be the voice of my father ; but on turning round, was amazed at the extraordinary change which I perceived in his person. His eye-brows, like my own, were vanished ; and on his head, which was formerly luxuriant with its natural covering, not a hair was to be seen. He seemed impatient for my answer, and I said, “ No, I am not married,” “ No, sir, said Laertes, there is a more intimate relation between this youth and me than that of

father and son-in-law." "What the devil! replied my father, did you put my son upon the stocks?" "Put him in the stocks!" said Laertes, not hearing him distinctly, "I am certain you never did." "What! Am I not the father of my own child? Since I landed in this country I have lost all the hair on my body by means of a damn'd dog; and now you would rob me of my son." "No, said Laertes, he is mine by priority of right." "By priority of right! exclaimed my father, why I don't understand you. Had you ever any connexion with my wife, sir?" "It is possible I may have

have had, replied Laertes; I shall not affirm the contrary even for your satisfaction." "Were you ever in Scyros?" said my father. "No," answered Laertes, I never was." "Then, by Jupiter! you have had nothing to do with my wife, replied my father; for she never was out of the island to this moment." "I may have known her in a former transmigration," said Laertes. "Transmigration! exclaimed my father, I wish I had never transmigrated into this country. As I live, I believe ye are all mad."

After a little more conversation in the pontifical apartments, I was conducted by my father to his

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lodgings.

lodgings. He informed me, on our way thither, that being impatient at my long stay in Egypt, he had made the voyage on purpose to fetch me home; and that along with him had come my intended father-in-law, and the young lady to whom I was to be married. He was resolved, he said, that our nuptials should be immediately consummated in Egypt, as the fecundating quality of the Nile might ensure him the pleasure of beholding his family strengthened by an additional generation. At hearing him declare this resolution I was almost petrified; for ever since the injury which I had received in the genital

genital parts, I knew myself to be utterly incapable of the conjugal rites; and how to resist his command, or evade his importunity, I was equally at a loss. Could I even have surmounted the delicacy which restrained me from divulging my misfortune, my heart would not permit me to give so violent a shock to the parental solicitude which he had expressed.

On arriving at the house, I found that the whole company was in a similar situation with my father. A dog had died in their former lodgings, and all of them were therefore constrained to sacrifice the hair on
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every part of their bodies. It afforded me additional sorrow that they had met with this disaster on my account. But the condition of the amiable young lady, whom I loved with the utmost tenderness, impressed me with peculiar affliction. The misery which I suffered was apparent in my behaviour; and her extreme sensibility induced her to imagine, that my unhappiness proceeded from the prospect of being united with a spouse who had lost the natural ornaments of her person. I endeavoured all in my power to dissipate her injurious suspicion; but the proposal which I was obliged to make of putting

ting off the nuptials for some time, confirmed her apprehensions, and even drew tears from her eyes: I suggested to my father, that as they were come to Egypt, they ought not to return home without viewing the curiosities of the country. My design was, that by procuring a little delay, I might have an opportunity to kill some dog or cat, or some other sacred animal, and so incur the penalty of death. My only scruple was the affliction such an incident would create to my friends. In the mean time I consulted one of the accursed tribe which had been the cause of all my calamity. He advised

ed me to bathe in the Nile twice a day, and even flattered me with the prospect of a cure. At the third immersion, I had no sooner plunged into the river than a crocodile, which lay concealed, darting forwards, instantly swallowed me whole. A miserable fate ! But it freed me from a life which had early, though innocently, been involved in insupportable distress.

END of the THIRD VOLUME.